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NINTH PLENUM SPEECH OF WLADYSLAW MATWIN
ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTION AND LOCAL INDUSTRY IN WARSAW

Nowe Drogi
 Warsaw, Oct 1953

[The following report of Wladyslaw Matwin, First Secretary of the Warsaw Committee of the PZPR, was given at the Ninth Plenum of the KC PZPR (Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party), held in Warsaw on 29-30 October 1953.

The report was given at the plenum as an amplification of the featured report of Premier Boleslaw Bierut, "Task of Party in Struggle to Raise Standard of Living of Workers in Current Phase of Building Socialism." An English-language translation of Bierut's report is available in the PAP (Polish Press Agency) release of 6 November 1953, pages 1-44.]

Labor productivity in industry and in construction increased greatly in Warsaw in 1953.

In housing construction, for instance, we had an increase in productivity per man in basic production of more than 20 percent from May to September. There was also a large increase in productivity in the engineering industry. In light industry and in the food industry, the increase was not quite as large.

People in Warsaw construction and Warsaw industry want to work. If we can assure them only a minimum of work organization we shall obtain a marked increase in the productivity of labor. It is an indication that the Warsaw working class is supporting our party and the government. This support is shown by the growing production activity but is not limited to production activity only. Political activity is also increasing. We recently conducted an extensive campaign on the relation of the state to the church in connection with the cases of Kaczmarek and Wyszynski, and also a campaign on the German question. In the course of these drives we found many excellent, well informed, politically developed people in our factories, who not only speak well at a meeting but also have a good political influence on the workers. The masses supported us on all these questions because they knew we spoke the truth.

The plenum is supplying us with a powerful instrument to use in continuing to increase production activities and political activities of the masses. People want to improve their living conditions. The Warsaw housing shortage is common knowledge. The housing question is urgent in many factories, some of which have not received a single housing allocation in years. There is an interesting example of initiative in this field. The workers of the Central Workshops of the Construction Industry manufactured a large number of meat-grinder blades from scrap material, for which they received a sizable sum. They found a burned-out home which had not been repaired. They found the home could easily be repaired and made livable at a relatively small cost. They petitioned the management that they be permitted to use the resources obtained from the salvaged material to build five workers' quarters in the house.

The management of Factory imeni 22 July (Fabryka imienia 22 Lipca) did not wait for the Warsaw People's Council to approve repairs. With their own resources they repaired 15 workers' quarters and expect to repair 15 more, using the services of their own factory workers.

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Recently there have been many such projects initiated. Let me emphasize that such concrete proof of concern for the people has a remarkable effect. It inspires and increases enthusiasm. A beginning has been made. No doubt there will be a great wave of proposals and suggestions for the improvement of living conditions. It will be our job to support these suggestions, thus giving the workers a practical illustration of their responsibilities in these matters. It will be up to us also to detect and combat the real danger existing in such a situation to the wojewodztwo People's Council. There will be a tendency for some individuals to gain the most for themselves and give the least to the communal project. In this situation, it is most urgent to improve party management. There has been some improvement in the methods of operation; many activists no longer shun the masses, no longer ignore the needs of the masses.

Many workers of the party apparatus and the administration of the Warsaw People's Council are participating in the work with the masses, giving information on actual political problems, and replying to questions. This is new. This is important. Our administration has become more politically minded recently. We have taught the secretary of the precinct committee how to choose his workers and instruct them in what to tell the people; we have taught him to guide the secretaries of primary party organizations in discussions and seminars in preparation for an effective party meeting. We now have the type of secretary who shows interest in the work of the agitators and in the work of the committee for the National Front, who recognizes that party indoctrination has been separated or isolated from life, and who recognizes that the work among the teachers is inadequate. He is now interested in commerce and health services, which until recently were of no interest to him; he is also interested in improving the work of the primary party organizations of the KD [unidentified] workers, and in methods of improving the training of workers of the party apparatus and protecting them against bureaucracy. In short, the party activists now show a healthy interest in seeking methods to improve their work.

Obviously there are still many defects in the content and the forms of party work; we are still very lax in studying matters which have a direct bearing on raising the standard of living of the workers.

We still need to study the costs of production; there are great inherent possibilities here. If we effected a decrease in costs more rapidly, we would improve the living conditions for the worker more rapidly. There is still much work for our activists in this field on Warsaw construction projects. Warsaw builders become incensed when they are obliged to take down interior walls of a building after they are up. It does not speak well for our training work, or for our struggle to reduce costs, if we permit such disorder.

In my opinion the struggle for reduced costs in construction and in industry ought to become the main theme of the work competition movement.

There is a great trend toward individual initiative and individual construction in Warsaw. There is much "wildcat" construction. We must endeavor to direct this effort into organized channels.

The Warsaw People's Council and the Warsaw Committee are working on a plan whereby the government would expand individual construction for the working class in Warsaw. This cooperative construction would be linked to the industrial plants and construction associations, which ought to form the basis for such construction cooperatives.

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If these two things could become associated in the minds of the Warsaw working class -- for instance, if a crew could save on building materials on their job and obtain as a premium an allocation of building materials for individual structures for workers, or for construction of a workers' settlement -- we would make great progress in this field. The working masses themselves would then aid us in reducing costs.

Local industry, work cooperatives, and service cooperatives play a great role in the struggle to satisfy the needs of the people. The situation in these industries is very unsatisfactory; production has fallen this year.

It is not always a question of shortage of materials. For instance, in the WZPO (Warszawskie Zakłady Przemysłu Odzieżowego, Warsaw Garment Industry Plants) No 2, there are thousands of meters of "waste" material which is not all waste but could be used in making children's apparel. The drawback is that regulations require the approval of the ministry itself to obtain this waste for production. Obviously this takes time and petitions are not always approved. These regulations ought to be changed and made more flexible.

We must make an effort to suit the product to the customers' tastes and needs. An official at the Central Garment Sales Office (Centrala Odzieżowa) in Lodz is the only one who can decide on production -- on the style, on whether men's jackets should be single or double breasted, on whether or not they should be sport models with short sleeves, etc. That is why there is a shortage of certain items on the market and the warehouses are overstocked with clothing for which there is no demand. Trade enterprises ought to make contracts with industry, stipulating quality, size, type, and range of goods required.

I have before me a contract, already signed, for the production of 12,345 overcoats and 45,170 men's suits. There is no mention of quality, type, assortment, color, or model. As a result, the people are not getting what they want and are shifting their trade to custom-made clothes (service enterprises). This should not be permitted. Factory-made clothing ought to be, and is, cheaper; services are costly and the network of tailoring shops is small.

Let me say a few words on the subject of these services. Work organization is very poor although there are extenuating circumstances. Financing offices in many instances take the wrong attitude toward the service organizations. The craftsmen fare even worse. Such a state of affairs should not be permitted, since we need the production of these craftsmen.

There are great possibilities everywhere for improvement, increased production, and elimination of some of the difficulties encountered by Warsaw residents.

Our primary party organizations suffer from one basic defect: they are not united. They cannot explain what they are fighting for; they do not know what changes are necessary in our lives and how to achieve them, or how to explain the ideologies of socialism in everyday language.

Our task is to aid our primary organizations to form a united front. At first we shall have to explain many things and answer many questions. Not everyone understands things at first glance. We shall have to make a great effort. We shall have to use this great mass of material supplied by the plenum to improve our work, and to become more aggressive in our party work.

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